

**Draft
USDA
Common Training Policy Handbook**

Table of Contents

Part One Purpose

Part Two Definitions

Part Three Responsibilities

Employees
Supervisors
Managers
Agency Training Staffs
Training Officers
Executive Board

Part Four Regulations / References

Government Employees Training Act (GETA)
5 USC 41
Executive Orders
Title 5, C.F.R., Parts 410 & 412
Other Laws / Agencies that Affect Training
OPM Training Policy Handbook
EEO Concerns
Merit Principles

Part Five Employee Development Process

Automated Training System
Needs Assessment
OPM Training Needs Assessment Handbook
Core Competencies/Core Curriculums
Individual Development Plan (IDP)
Enrollment in Training
Training Authorization Form (SF-182)
Training Automated Information System (TRAI)
Obligating Funds For Training
Employee Responsibilities
Grade Requirements for Academic Training
Assignment to Training
Employee Pays for Training
Continued Service Agreement

Draft
USDA
Common Training Policy Handbook

Part Six Procurement of Training

- Individual Training (See SF-182)
- Vendor Provided Training
 - Ethics of vendor
 - Customized / Off-the-Shelf
 - Purchase Order
- Training Expenses (also see Part Ten--Facilities)
 - Advance Payment
 - Reimbursement
 - Examinations, Licenses and Certifications
 - Books, Fees, Materials, Supplies
 - Membership Fees / Dues in Professional Organizations
 - Pay while attending Training
 - Fair Labor Standard Act (FLSA)
 - Over-time
 - Over-time pay for Travel
 - Transportation
 - Privately Owned Vehicle
 - Travel costs
 - Per Diem
 - Use of Government Funds
 - Lodging and meals at place of duty

Part Seven Employee Development Categories / Opportunities

- Establishing Training Programs
- Required Training
 - Civil Rights
 - Computer Security
 - Ethics
 - Executive, Management and Supervisory
 - Customer Service
 - Warranty
- Orientation for New Employees
- Program and Technology Training
 - Program
 - Retraining
- Developmental Training
- Special Training Programs

Draft
USDA
Common Training Policy Handbook

Noncompetitive Programs
 On the Job Training
 Mentoring
 Competitive Programs
 Academic Degree Training - (shortage positions)
 Cross Training
 Career Enhancement
 Scholarship Programs
 Formalized Graduate Study Programs
 Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program
 Capital Hill Workshops
 Congressional Fellowship Program
 Others
 Training for Others than Career Federal Employees
 Non-Government Employees - Contractors
 Foreign
 Temporary Employees - Students/Interns
 State, County, Local Area Employees
 Volunteers
 Employee's Spouse and Children

Part Eight Training Sources and Delivery Methods

Sources
 Contracting with Government Employees
 Interagency
Delivery Methods
 Classroom
 Computer Based Training (CBT)
 Self-Paced
 Satellite
 Internet
 CD-ROM
 Meetings and Conferences
 Training Resources Libraries

Part Nine Course Development

Proposal Process
Design Teams
Development Teams
Copyright Laws
Piloting

Draft
USDA
Common Training Policy Handbook

Part Ten Facilities for Training and Meetings

Government versus Non-Government facilities
Employees with Disabilities
Meals / Refreshments
Meals for outside speakers

Part Eleven Common Training Questions

Part One - Purpose

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a common training policy for the National Offices, Service Centers, and other field offices of the Rural Development, Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services (FFAS) which includes Farm Services Agency (FSA), Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) and Natural Resources and Environment (NRCS).

The Government Employee Training Act, 5 CFR, 410, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management Training Policy Handbook, Departmental requirements, and union agreements prescribe training policy.

Training policy is based on evaluation of the needs of the involved agencies and individual employees. The policy addresses short and long range goals and objectives. It is flexible enough to accommodate individual, geographic, and cultural differences.

All employees are given the opportunity to receive appropriate training to enable them to perform their assigned duties in an effective manner. Employees are considered without discrimination for any non-merit reasons such as race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical or mental handicap, or membership or nonmembership in an employee organization.

Program Training

This policy does not specifically address program training. Generally training policies and training regulations that apply to non-program training also apply to program training.

Handbook

This handbook is for all employee development/training practices and procedures. It provides reference to legal information impacting employee training.

Objectives

The Common Training Policy objectives are to effectively service the public by providing:

intensive orientation and training of new personnel
training to improve:

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees in their present jobs
supervisory and management practices
career enhancement and development opportunities

employee development and training opportunities for employees
regardless of

race
color
age
sex
national origin
religion
marital status
disability

membership or nonmembership in an employee organization
training that is not offensive or designed to change participants'
personal values or lifestyle outside the workplace.

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

Part Two - Definitions

Definitions of Organizational Terms Used in	<u>Common Training Policy Agencies</u> - Agencies that provide administrative support to the mission areas of the Rural Development Agency, Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services Agencies (FFAS) including Farm Service Agency (FSA), Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS), Risk Management Agency (RMA), and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
	<u>Agency Training Advisory Board</u> - Representatives of the above mission areas who act as an oversight committee for the common policy training program.
	<u>Training Staff</u> - The training personnel of the Common Training Policy Agencies who provide administrative support to the employees of the above mentioned agencies.
Definitions of Commonly Used Training Terms (alphabetical order)	Definitions for Part 2 - Commonly Used Training Terms
	Core Curriculum - Curriculum developed from core competencies related To a specific occupational work series.
	Core Competencies - Competencies needed to successfully perform in a specific occupational work series.
	Core Leadership Competencies - Competencies recognized by the Office of Personnel Management as necessary to effectively perform in management positions.
	Cost Effective - means the program that best meets the agency needs at a competitive price. It does not mean the least expensive program.
	Customized Group Training - is any publicly offered course modified to meet agency specifications.
	First-Level Supervisor - is an employee who supervises 3 or more nonsupervisory employees.
	Formal Training - is a classroom setting with a planned program of instruction presented by qualified instructors.

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

Group Training - course offered to all employees.

Individual Development Plan (IDP) - A systematic process that enables employees and their supervisors to identify individual development needs, select optimum development activities, and prepare development schedules.

Individual Training - Course offered to one employee to meet their specific training and performance needs.

Management Development Training - Training, seminars, and workshops in the principles of supervision and management.

Mentoring - is a formal program designed to assist the employee to enhance their career potential.

“New Age” Training Program - “New Age” training program are programs that use a wide variety of techniques or exercises that conflict with the employee’s religious beliefs such as meditations, guided visualization, self-hypnosis, therapeutic touch, biofeedback, yoga, walking on fire, and inducing altered states of consciousness.

Orientation Training - is the initial training provided to new employees covering rules, regulations, rights, benefits, administrative matters, and an overview of organizational objectives, functions, and structure as opposed to specific job-related training.

Performance goals - are goals that assist the agency in meeting organizational and individual efforts in improving communication, technology, program delivery, employee knowledge, skills and abilities, and policy formulation and evaluation.

Program training is a meeting or course on farm programs.

Technical training is a meeting or course in subject matter areas such as ADP, marketing, or accounting.

Temporary Duty Training means detailing employees to other units or locations for training purposes.

Training is the process of providing for and making available to an employee, and placing or enrolling the employee in, a planned, prepared, and coordinated program, course, curriculum, subject, system, or routine of instruction or education, in scientific, professional, technical,

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

mechanical, trade, clerical, fiscal, administrative, or other fields that will accomplish both of the following:

- improve individual and organizational performance
- assist in achieving the agency's mission and performance goals.

Training Information System (TRAI) - is an NFC electronic data processing system that maintains current and historical training information for Federal employees.

Part Three - Responsibilities

**Agency Training
Advisory Board
(ATAB)**

The Agency Training Advisory Board (ATAB) consists of the Training Directors from each agency providing the common training services for their employees.

- (1) Provides leadership and direction for training and employee development;
- (2) Sets priorities for training;
- (3) Formulates and allocates the budget for all national training; and
- (4) Serves as a clearinghouse for all new training initiatives.

Training Staff

The Training Staff

- (1) Establishes an employee development and training program as an integral part of the overall Human Resources Management Program;
- (2) Develops training goals based on agency initiatives, strategic plans, business plans, and budgeting requirements;
- (3) Makes recommendations to the Agency Training Advisory Board;
- (4) Assists management in the identification of training needs;
- (5) Identifies and selects training sources;
- (6) Designs, develops, delivers, markets and evaluates program specific training;
- (7) Develops and maintains on-line course catalog and delivery schedules;
- (8) Analyzes participants test;
- (9) Analyzes course evaluations;
- (10) Generates annual training reports; and
- (11) Keeps current on the latest developments in training and career development.
- (12) Supervises national training programs
- (13) Monitors field office training activities to ensure that they are in accordance with common training policies.
- (14) Selects training locations and facilities.

**Managers/
Supervisors**

Managers/Supervisors

- (1) Work with employees to develop Individual Development Plans (IDPs);
- (2) coordinate annual training needs assessment
- (3) formulate local training plans based on training needs and budget
- (4) ensures that new employees receive appropriate orientation
- (5) recommends appropriate training for employees
- (6) evaluate effectiveness of training when the employees completes training and returns to the job.
- (7) forward training requests through appropriate channels in a timely

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

manner.

Employees

Employees

-
- (1) Develop their potential by applying their own efforts, time, and resources together with opportunities provided by the Agencies;
 - (2) Develop an Individual Development Plan in consultation with their supervisors;
 - (3) Request needed training; and
 - (4) Inform training office and supervisor if unable to attend scheduled training;
 - (5) Satisfactorily complete training and apply on-the-job knowledge and skills learned.
-

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

Part Four - Regulations/References/EEO & Merit Principles

Sources of Authority

The provisions of this handbook are authorized under:

the Government Employees Training Act
Chapter 41 of title 5, USC (5 U.S.C. 41)
Executive Orders & Comptroller General (GC) Decisions
Parts 410 & 412 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (5 C.F.R.)
OPM requirements
USDA requirements
other related administrative authority.

References

The OPM Training Policy Handbook: Authorities and Guidelines is the single reference to legal information impacting employee training. Many of subject areas covered in the OPM handbook are not addressed in this handbook.

OPM's Training Needs Assessment Handbook is a guide to assist in planning and implementing effective needs assessment systems. This handbook outlines a step by step approach.

Equal Employment Opportunity Concerns and Merit Principles

Agencies are required to include in their equal employment opportunity plans provisions for training and education programs designed to provide opportunities for employees to advance and perform at their highest potential.

Agencies' training programs must consider all employees fairly. Training shall be provided for employees without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, sex, disability, or other factors unrelated to the need for training.

Training procedures are necessary to ensure that the selection of employees for training is made without regard to political preference, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicapping condition, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights.

Agency merit promotion procedures must be followed in selecting employees for training that is primary to prepare trainees for advancement and that is not directly related to improving performance in their current positions.

Part Five - Procedures and Process

**Automated
Training
System**

The agencies will use an automated training system to:

- (1) Develop & maintain training needs assessment process
- (2) Record core competencies and related core curriculums
- (3) Record annual individual development plans
- (4) Schedule courses and enroll participants
- (5) Record course evaluation data
- (6) Generate training reports
- (7) Track individual training records

FSA is currently developing this training system within the Combined Administrative Management System (CAMS). Implementation of this system will be introduced at a future date.

Needs Assessment

The purpose of needs assessment is to identify performance requirements or needs within the participating agencies in order to help direct resources to areas of greatest need - those that closely relate to fulfilling organizational mission, improving productivity, and providing quality products and services to the customer of each agency. Needs assessment is a systematic process that includes multi-levels of assessment:

Organizational assessment
Occupational assessment, and
Individual assessment.

Using a step by step approach in needs assessment will result in the agencies' ability to link training to performance goals, enabling them to prioritize training needs and make accountable decisions on investing training resources.

**OPM Training
Needs Assessment
Handbook**

The OPM Training Needs Assessment Handbook is the guide for conducting needs assessment. Line or program managers, supervisors, as well as agency employees.

**Core Competencies
Core Curriculums**

The needs assessment process identifies core competencies necessary to successfully perform in a position. The knowledges and skills identified as necessary to perform these competencies are instrumental in the ability to develop core curriculums specific to the varying occupational work series within the bureau. Core curriculums recommend training courses that develop the identified knowledges and skills. The development of core curriculums related to identified core competencies of a occupational series will be optional.

Individual

Once the needs assessment process is completed the supervisor and

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

Development Plan (IDP)

employee is responsible for preparing the Individual Development Plan (IDP). An IDP and a performance appraisal have the same focus-fostering individual and organizational improvement.

The IDP process is a continuing cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation between an employee and supervisor. It requires time to

analyze job requirements,
assess current competencies and
make informed decisions about developmental needs.

Each employee is to have an IDP that addresses their present position and their future career goals. Training plans are developed and revised at the beginning of the fiscal year in conjunction with the annual performance review.

Tools to be used in developing the IDP include the

position description,
past and current performance appraisal, and
performance elements and standards.

These tools can help the employee determine long and short range career goals. The supervisor and employee can identify training needs for the next year.

Enrollment in Training

Once the IDP is in place it is the responsibility of the employee to assure that they are enrolled in the training identified on the development plan.

Training Authorization

The SF-182, Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training Form is the official form to be used to request training. (Usage of this official form will be incorporated into the automated training system.)

Training Automated Information System (TRAI)

Presently, the National Finance Center's TRAI system is currently the official system for recording training. This system can also be used for payment of training. However, this system will be replaced once CAMS is in place.

Obligating Funds for Training

The SF-182 is the authorized form that is used to obligate training funds, contract for training, and certify payment of approved training expenses.

Agencies will maintain their individual training procurement processes until the automated training system is in place.

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

Employee Responsibilities	Employee must notify training office and/or supervisor of his/her inability to attend scheduled training. This notification is necessary so the training office can reschedule employee, find a substitute or de-obligate agency for procured training.
Grade Requirements for Academic Training	Employees must attain a grade of “C” or above in academic training. An employee who fails to complete a course or receives a grade of less than “C” shall reimburse the agency for the cost of the course, including books and materials, unless a waiver is granted by their respective agency.
Assignment to Training	An employee assigned to training during normal duty hours is considered On duty for the period of training, and no charge is made to leave. Training law allows agencies and employees to share the costs of authorized training. No charge is made to leave, even though the employees pays for the training if the training is authorized to meet a performance improvement need.
Continued Service Agreement	Agencies will determine the conditions for requiring employees to agree to continue in service after completing training. An employee selected for training subject to a service agreement must agree in writing to continue in service for a period at least equal to three times the length of the training period. If the employee leaves the agency before the agreed upon amount of service, the agency has the right to require repayment for the amount of time not served. The head of the agency may waive in whole or in part the agency’s right to recovery.

Part Six - Procurement of Training

**Training
Request**

Agencies may use various methods to procure training. Such methods may include electronic processes (i.e. CAMS) , credit cards, and/or the SF-182 - Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training form.

The training must be authorized by an appropriate training officer (or his/her designee) prior to registration, enrollment, and/or the start of the training. Training request should be received by the training office at least 15 working days prior to the scheduled course starting date or nomination deadline to allow time for authorization and processing.

An approved request is required for all training that is 8 hours or more, regardless of any costs involved.

An approved request must also be used for any training, regardless of the number of hours, if there are any costs involved.

An approved request must also be used to obligate funds, contract for training, and certify payment of approved training expenses. It will also be use for requesting, approving, and certifying payment; for attendance at meetings, conferences, seminars, and symposia where the primary purpose is to train an employee to meet a performance improvement related need.

**Use of Government
Funds for Training**

The participating agencies may provide whatever training is necessary to meet mission requirements. The authorities granted by the Government Employees Training Act (Chapter 41 of Title 5, United States Code) are sufficiently broad and flexible to enable the Bureau to provide whatever training is necessary to develop the skills, knowledge, and abilities that will best qualify employees for the performance of official duties.

Under the law, agencies can conduct Human Resource Development activities full or part-time, on or off-duty, day or evening, or any necessary combination of these. Training can be provided by:

- the participating agencies;
- another Government agency;
- a school (Ex. College, University);
- a manufacturer;
- a professional organization;

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

other competent persons or groups in or out of Government; and/or developmental work assignments such as details, rotations, mentoring, etc.

The training can be carried out by correspondence, classroom work, conferences, workshops, supervised practice, or combinations of these such methods.

Agencies are prohibited from spending appropriated funds on training that is offensive to Federal employees unnecessary in the execution of their official duties. Congress defined inappropriate or offensive training as training that:

- does not bear directly on an employee's official duties;
- induces high levels of unnecessary emotional or psychological stress;
- does not notify employees prior to training of the content and methods to be used;
- does not have required written course evaluations;
- contains methods or content associated with religious quasi-religious belief systems, or "new-age" belief systems;
- is offensive to, or designed to change, employee's personal values or lifestyle outside the workplace; or
- includes non-work related material on HIV or AIDS.

Academic Degree Training

Training to obtain an academic degree in order to qualify for appointment to a particular position or for the sole purpose of providing an opportunity to an employee to obtain one or more degrees is prohibited.

However, Federal agencies have the authority to train in certain situations without regard to the general academic degree constraints. This amendment implicitly carries with it the authority to provided training to attain an academic degree when it will aid in the recruitment or retention of employees in occupations in which the Government has or expects a shortage of qualified personnel, especially in occupations involving critical skills. Contact your training office prior to implementing any course of study that would lead to an academic degree.

Fiscal Year funds

Training and development expenses should be charged to the fiscal year appropriation in which the obligation is incurred regardless of the fact that the training may extend into the following fiscal year.

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

Agencies may also charge a previous fiscal year application for the entire cost of the training if it begins in the next fiscal year when:

- the course meets a bona fide need of the previous fiscal year
- the scheduling of the course is beyond agency control
- the time between procurement and performance is not excessive.

Selecting Training Vendors

Securing competition for Group or Customized Training

Delivery of Goods and Services in a subsequent fiscal year

The agency also may charge a previous fiscal year appropriation for the entire cost of the training if it begins in the next fiscal year when:

- 1) the course meets a bona fide need of the previous fiscal year;
- 2) the scheduling of the course is beyond the agency's control; and
- 3) the time between procurement and performance is not excessive (December 31).

Group Training

In general, the criteria for individual training and development applies to group training.

Regardless of the vendor, group training must be requested by contacting your training office well in advance of the proposed start of the training. However, it is important to remember that scheduling a group session with a vendor will usually require additional lead time, so please contact your training office as soon as possible.

Group training, like individual training, should not begin until all approvals and authorizations are completed.

Off-The-Shelf Training

Off-The-Shelf Training is training that can be provided by a vendor virtually no customization. Generally, the training office can make appropriate arrangements with the vendor.

Customized Training

However, if customization is required, significant lead time may be needed in order to process a purchase order and allow time to review the customization prior to the final authorization of the training. Please consult with your training office as soon as you know that you will need an outside vendor and that the training needs to be customized.

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

In addition, regardless of the procurement method used to obtain group training, the individual training experience should be documented.

Training Expenses	<p>Training law permits an agency to pay all, some, or none of an employee's training expenses as long as the training is necessary to develop the skill, knowledge, and abilities that will best qualify employees for the performance of official duties. All training expenses should be documented using an approved SF-182.</p> <p>The Bureau may pay for the following: tuition, books, materials, supplies, fees, per diem, travel, and other expenses essential to training as long as there is some mechanism to protect the Government's interest, such as reimbursement if the training is not completed or passed.</p>
Tuition and Fees	<p>The agencies may pay tuition, fees, and related costs for all approved training and development courses.</p> <p>The necessary cost of library and laboratory services are payable when they are an integral part of the course or program of study; or, are required by the academic institution as part of the tuition and matriculation fees.</p>
Membership in Professional Organizations	<p>Training expenses do not include membership fees except to the extent that:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">the fee is a necessary cost directly related to the training payment of the fee is a condition precedent to undergoing the training, as is the case with Toastmaster's International.</p>
Travel Expenses	<p>Employees may be reimbursed for all or part of the necessary travel costs. The GSA Federal Travel Regulations determine what specific travel costs may be paid.</p>
Privately Owned Vehicles	<p>The Agencies may authorize and pay all or part of the necessary expenses of employees using privately owned vehicles to travel to and from training.</p> <p>The employee may use a privately owned vehicle when it is properly authorized when such use is for the good of the Government.</p>
Parking Fee	<p>When a parking fee is required at the training site, the parking fee is an allowable expense.</p>
Catering Expenses	<p>The cost of catering expenses (consisting of luncheons, dinners, and coffee breaks) furnished by a hotel to a training program may be a proper administrative expense necessary to achieve the goals of the training program. Such costs were permitted because they were an integral part of</p>

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

a training program which sought to establish an environment that required, stimulated, and fostered communication and interaction among participants as often as possible.

Examinations, licenses, and certifications:

Because a Federal employee is responsible for obtaining the qualifications necessary to perform the duties of his or her position, the Bureau may not pay or reimburse the employee for the cost of examinations, licenses, or certifications, even if required by the state where the Federal employee works.

For example, the Bureau may not pay the costs for law school tuition or bar admission fees, professional certificates required as a qualification for the employee's position, professional accreditation; including certification as a government Financial Manager, or state licenses required for an employee to perform Federal duties unless Federal law expressly required Federal agencies to comply with state regulations. If compliance with state requirements is mandated by statute, agencies may, at their discretion, spend appropriated funds to reimburse its employees for licensing or certification fees required to perform their duties.

In limited cases, the cost of training to prepare an employee for an examination, such as for licensing or certification, is payable when the employee is already qualified for the position held. The costs of the examination and related travel and per diem expenses associated with the taking of that examination are not payable under the training law.

Exceptions are when:

- the examination serves as a diagnostic tool to determine deficiencies in knowledge and skills needed by an employee in the performance of official duties; or
- the cost of the examination is a part of the cost of the training program.

Lodging and meals at place of duty

The head of an agency is authorized to cover all expenses necessary for a training event.

If the agency requires all participants of a training course to stay in a local hotel while in training, a per diem allowance at headquarters may be authorized as a necessary training expense.

Purchase or rental of books, materials, and supplies

An agency may pay for the purchase or rental of books, materials, and supplies associated with a training course if such materials and/or supplies is required by the training. Agencies may also pay for a magazine subscription used in the training course or program of study.

Meals not covered by registration fees

When a meal is not covered by a registration fee, its cost may be paid under the training statute if the following conditions are met:

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

the meal must be incidental to the training program;
attendance at the meal must be necessary for full participation in the program; and
the employee cannot be free to take the meal elsewhere.

Per Diem

An agency may pay, or reimburse the employee, for all or part of per diem expenses. The GSA Federal Travel Regulations determine per diem rates. Therefore, an agency may not make any payments above the applicable full per diem rate specified in those regulations.

An agency may pay a reduced per diem rate or a standardized payment to employees in temporary duty training assignments. If a reduced or standardized per diem rate is not authorized in advance of the travel and the fees paid to a training institution include lodging or meal costs, the agency must make an appropriated deduction from the total per diem rate payable to the employee.

Part Seven - Training Categories

The Employee Development Program has five broad training categories:

- required training
- orientation for new employees
- program and technical training
- developmental training
- special programs

Required Training Required training covers the following subjects:

- **Computer Security**
Employees must receive initial, continuing, and refresher computer security training at the appropriate level for their positions.
- **Civil Rights**
Title VI and VII Civil Rights training is mandatory for all employee.
- **Executive, Management, and Supervisory**
The leadership competencies developed by OPM are used as the basis leadership and development training.
 - systematic development of executives, managers, supervisors, and candidates for these positions
 - a minimum of 40 hours of supervisory training for new supervisors within the first year
 - continuing learning experiences so that the individual may achieve the mastery level of proficiency for his or her current management level and position
 - systematic development of candidates for higher management levels
- **Ethics**
Each new employee must have Ethics training within 90 days of the date of his or her entrance on duty.
- **Warranty**
Employees in certain positions periodically attend required courses that ensure warranty compliance.

Orientation for New Employees New employees receive formal orientation training within six months of employment.

Program and Employees continuously refresh and improve their expertise to ensure

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

Technical Training	quality service to customers. Funds are committed to ensure employees keep current with rapidly changing technology, procedures, and idea.
Developmental Training	Agency merit promotion prodecures are followed in selecting employees for training that is primarily to prepare trainees for advancement and that is not directly related to improve performance.
Special Program	<p>Several special programs are competively offered to employees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Career Enhancement (Upward Mobility)• Scholarship programs taht provide development opportunities for employees in grades GS-1 - GS-10• Formalized graduate study programs at accredited colleges or universities• Senior Executives Service Candidate Development Program• Capitol Hill Workshop• Congressional Fellowship Program• Excellence in Government Fellows Program• Aspiring Leader Program• New Leader Program• Executive Potential Program for Mid-Level Employees• Women's Excecutive Leadership Program

Part Eight - Training Sources & Delivery Methods

Training Sources	<p>Every effort is made to identify and procure training that meets or exceeds training needs through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) government;(2) private vendors<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) off the shelfb) contracted developmentc) contracted deliveryd) colleges and universities. <p>If the determination is made that no vendor provided training meets an identified need Agencies will assist the Bureau to design, develop, and deliver the needed training.</p> <p>Cooperative agreements may be arranged among other agencies to design, develop, and deliver training common to the agencies.</p> <p>Employees may attend training presented by other agencies.</p> <p>Other agency employees may attend agency training on a space available basis.</p>
Training Delivery	<p>People learn in many way, and often people learn better if their training includes a variety of learning experiences. In addition to traditional classroom delivery, Agencies uses diversified training delivery methods.</p>
Formal Training	<p>Formal training is any training that is conducted in a group setting and that is eight hours or more in duration. The methodology in formal training may involve lectures, case studies, small group activities, field trips, and other instructor-managed activities that have specific learning objectives.</p>
On-the Job Training	<p>The most frequently used method of individualized learning is On-the-Job training (OJT). The learner is counseled and coached while performing hands-on tasks. OJT is suitable not only for the new employee, but also for the more experienced employee. It can be used to teach employees new procedures, tasks, and technology.</p>
Detail and Rotational Assignments	<p>This methodology broadens employees' work experience and knowledge by allowing them to temporarily work in positions not permanently assigned to them. NOTE: Some details may require that competitive procedures are followed to ensure that all interested</p>

USDA Common Training Policy Handbook

employees are offered an opportunity for special assignments that may lead to promotional opportunities.

Self-Study

This cost-effective methodology allows employees to work at their own pace at their own work sites. It includes:

- Computer-based training
- Reading programs
- Correspondence courses
- Videos
- Audio Cassettes

Distance Learning

The term, distance learning, describes education activities that interactively link two or more people at two or more locations. It can be used to:

- Provide access to professional educational and training opportunities
- Provide access to experts working at other locations
- Provide employees in remote or dispersed locations access to primary site employees, Instructional materials, and other resources
- Network dispersed groups
- Improve education equity

Distance Learning includes:

- Audio teleconferencing
- Computer teleconferencing
- Audiographic teleconferencing
- Video teleconferencing

Part Nine - Course Development

**Performance
Based Design**

In order to meet agency-specific skills and knowledge requirements, training is often designed and developed by agency training specialists and agency subject matter experts. They use a performance-based design system that consists of four phases.

Analysis:

During the analysis phase, the performance problems, employees having the problems, and the causes of the problems are identified.

• Design:

Task identification, training objectives, tests, activities, and methodology selection are completed during the design phase.

• Development:

- Subject matter experts and training specialists develop lesson plans, student materials, visuals, and delivery strategies during the development phase.

Validation:

The training is delivered to members of the target audience who evaluate the effectiveness of the training during the validation phase. Revisions to the training are made as necessary.

The new training is then formally listed in the common agency course schedule and becomes a part of the training program.

Part Ten - Facilities for Training and Meetings

**Training &
Meeting
Facilities**

Government facilities for training and/or meetings should be considered prior to any use of non-Government facilities. Non-government facilities may be selected when adequate Government facilities are not reasonably available.

Service Center Agencies are prohibited by law from using a facility that discriminates in the admission or treatment of individuals because of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin.

**Employees
with
Disabilities**

Service Center Agencies must also ensure that discrimination does not result from the use of facilities that deny access on other grounds, such as lack of “reasonable accommodation” of people with disabilities.

Service Center Agencies may pay expenses necessary to make training and/or meetings accessible to employees with disabilities.

Agencies may pay for individuals to accompany or aid employees with disabilities traveling on official business (including travel for training and/or meetings) within prescribed U.S. General Services Administration salary, travel, and per diem rates for Federal employees.

Service Center Agencies have indicated that they will make every practical effort to ensure that training programs and meetings are accessible to participants with disabilities. Agencies will pay the cost of readers and interpreters for employees attending training and meetings. Prior notification is necessary to insure that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Part Ten - Training Questions and Answers

1. What courses can I take?

As a Government employee, you may be allowed to enroll in any training course to provide you with whatever training is necessary to develop your skills, knowledge, and abilities that will best qualify you to do your job.

2. How do I find out about training opportunities?

You may wish to contact your training office, talk with your supervisor, or contact local vendors (public and/or private).

3. Where can I take courses?

You may take training courses, through any public and/or private vendor as long as the training is related to your job as described above. It should be noted, that the training should be the most economical available that meets your and the Government's needs.

4. How do I sign up for training?

Procedures are quite simple, however, you should check with your supervisor and/or training office to determine your exact procedures. It is important to note that you may not register for training until you receive the necessary approvals.

5. Who pays for the training?

Generally, your agency and/or office will pay for all training that is related to the performance of your official duties. However, you should check with your supervisor to determine if funds are available.

6. Am I allowed to take training during working hours?

Non-credit courses are generally attended during duty hours. You will need to make sure your supervisor approves your training prior to the beginning of classes. However, college courses (courses taken for credit) are not to be attended "during duty hours".

7. Is training all classroom training?

No, training can be offered in many different methods. For example, there is classroom training, on-the-job training, details, correspondence courses, video, teleconferencing, and satellite training that may be offered to you depending upon the course.

8. Can I take college courses to earn a degree?

Training to obtain an academic degree is generally, prohibited. However, Federal agencies have the authority to train in certain situations without regard to the general academic degree constraints. This is very limited and you should contact your training office prior to implementing any course of study that would lead to an academic degree.

This, however, does limit employees from requesting a college course that is necessary to develop the skills, knowledge, and abilities related to the performance of official duties.

9. What do I do if I can not attend the scheduled training?

It is your responsibility to notify the vendor, your supervisor, and the training office as soon as possible. This is necessary so that the Government may not be charged for the training, or at least limit the Government's obligation to a cancellation fee.

10. Who can I contact to have other training questions answered?

Your training office will be able to answer any training question. The training office and your supervisor will also be able to advise you as to which training courses will be most appropriate for you.